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BUYING IN 1932.

A radio talk by Miss Ruth O'Brien, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, January 4, 1932, through a network of 46 associate NBC stations.

I feel highly complimented to be included on the radio program this very first Monday in the new year. And speaking of new years, have you felt a little different atmosphere during these first few days of 1932? I have. When the whistles began to toot Thursday night, it seemed to me I could hear a sort of gasp of relief that 1931 was done with. And everybody around seemed to have a feeling of certainty that 1932 will be better. It is going to be a better year. As one of my neighbors back in Iowa used to say "I feel it in my bones."

How about a new year's resolution to become better buyers? Right now is a good time to try it out. There are certainly splendid bargains in the stores these days. But bargains like everything else in this world must be used intelligently. I think it is a good plan never to go to a sale without a very definite idea of what is wanted and how much we can afford to spend. It is the aimless shopper who usually ends up as the disappointed person with an empty purse.

And then we must keep our minds on these qualities and not be led astray by the novelty of something we happen to see. If we can't tell whether or not the merchandise offered us has the qualities in which we are interested, do we ask intelligent questions? Do we insist on getting the information? Some of us are hoping that the time will come when every article on the retail counter will be labeled with grades or specifications so that we can tell, for example, how warm a blanket is or what temperature a refrigerator will maintain. It is fundamental facts like these which should be the basis of our purchases and not the guesses we often are compelled to make.

Let's learn all we can about quality in merchandise during 1932. Let's buy more thoughtfully and more wisely than ever before. I often wonder how many things are bought on impulse and how much money is spent due to our snobbishness. Because that desire to keep up with the Jones' is nothing but snobbishness, you know. So often we buy not because we really need the thing we purchase nor because it will give us any real comfort or joy. We buy because Mrs. Jones has one or they - that illusive they - are wearing it. I think we should be as honest and sincere in our buying as in anything else. We don't live with the things Mrs. Jones buys. It is what will give us and our families most satisfaction which really counts - but it must be lasting satisfaction. We must bear that in mind. And lasting satisfaction depends on whether or not the purchase is fundamentally good - good in material, good in construction, and artistically correct. Purchases like these are not made without thought. They are not snap judgments.

I heard the other day of a woman who wandered into one of those furnished rooms the department stores arrange to help us in our buying. She looked around for a minute or two and then said: "I'll take all of the pictures you have in this room. They must be right since you have chosen them and they seem to go well together." Just think of it. Buying pictures in such a haphazard fashion.

(over)

Pictures - which above all things should give personal pleasure and satisfaction. Why, it seems to me it would be better to live in a house with bare walls forever, than to look day after day at a picture which was purchased not because I liked it but because some one else said it was the thing to buy.

My mind went back to one of the most satisfactory salesmen I ever dealt with - a man in an art store in Washington. I went into his shop one day and chose a picture. But he wouldn't let me buy it right then. He said: "I'll send this one and these other three which have interested you out to your house. You put them in place for a few days and see which one you would really want to live with." He did just that although all of the pictures were inexpensive and his sale would not amount to a great deal. I hung each picture over my fireplace for a couple of days. And at the end of the week I knew which one I wanted to live with and I have never changed my mind.

What we buy makes such a difference in how we live, in how much joy and satisfaction we get from life. Don't you think it should be done very carefully and very thoughtfully during 1932, and every other year for that matter? Was it Emerson who wrote "I am not one thing and my expenditures another. My expenditure is me."